



## Toppenish, Wash. Smitty's Conoco gas station required to clean up groundwater contamination caused by petroleum spill

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(Seattle—April 29, 2010) R.H. Smith Distributing Company, Inc. entered into an agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to clean up a petroleum spill at Smitty's Conoco, its former gas station located on the Yakama Reservation. The administrative order signed by the company requires it to follow a schedule of clean up agreed to by EPA and the company.

The petroleum distribution company removed the underground storage tanks and associated petroleum contaminated soil in November 2009 due to EPA pressure. According to EPA site records, there were three underground storage tanks used for fueling automobiles at the Smitty's Conoco Toppenish location. The three tanks had a total capacity of 14,000 gallons of gasoline and 4,000 gallons of diesel fuel. During the company's soil and tank removal activities in 2009, two additional abandoned tanks were found, one of which contained an oily sludge.

The five tanks, approximately 40 years old, were removed from a depth of approximately six feet below ground surface. The removal revealed extensive soil contamination. Approximately 1,500 tons of contaminated soil was removed to a depth of 12 feet below ground surface, at which point groundwater was encountered and the excavation stopped. An oily sheen was visually evident floating on the groundwater seeping into the excavation; and residents within a mile of the facility use groundwater as their main source of potable water.

"Community safety is a top priority—about 60 percent of Washington residents depend on groundwater for their drinking water," said Peter Contreras, EPA's Ground Water Unit Manager in Seattle "Facilities need to be diligent in cleaning up releases when they

are discovered. We will take action when we see a risk that isn't being addressed as required by the law."

Petroleum leaks can percolate into groundwater and contaminate drinking water sources leading to an increased risk for cancer and other health affects. Since 2005, inspections have been required of all regulated underground storage tanks every three years to ensure that operational requirements are in place to prevent petroleum leaks from going undetected and degrading groundwater quality.

The EPA order requires the facility to develop a plan to address groundwater contamination on and off site. It will set a strict schedule that must be met to remediate the petroleum contamination caused by the leaking tanks. The company has agreed to pay stipulated penalties of up to \$10,000 per violation per day if it fails to meet the terms of the Order.

R.H. Smith Distributing Company, Inc. owns several Smitty's Conoco facilities. The location in Toppenish is formerly a Spirit brand retail fueling and associated convenience store located at the southeast corner of East Toppenish Avenue and Asotin Avenue in Toppenish, Washington. The facility was formerly known as the Toppenish Pik-a-Pop, and until recently was conducting business under the name of Smitty's Conoco.

For more information about leaking underground storage tanks, visit:  
<http://www.epa.gov/r10earth/ust.htm>

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